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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

US Versus Soviet Emergency Aid To Peru

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
August 1970

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

US Versus Soviet Emergency Aid To Peru

Introduction

Immediately following the Peruvian earthquakes on 31 May 1970 which killed an estimated 50,000 persons and left another half million homeless, there was a massive outpouring of assistance from a number of countries, led by the United States. More than a week passed before the USSR officially expressed sympathy, two weeks elapsed before a token amount of Soviet Red Cross aid arrived in Peru, and it was not until six weeks later that a much publicized Soviet airlift to Peru began. This memorandum discusses the difficulties and delays surrounding the Soviet aid effort, and compares the scope of this effort with that of the United States and other countries.

US Assistance to Peru

1. The United States was one of the few countries that responded immediately to the needs for assistance generated by the Peruvian earthquake. On 1 June, the day after the disaster, US Ambassador Belcher extended the sympathy of the United States and presented a check for \$25,000 to the Junta de Asistencia Nacional. This was followed by his immediate request for material aid. On 2 June, several loads of supplies arrived by airlift from a disaster reserve set up in Panama.

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2. During the period 2 June - 11 July, 44 flights were made from the United States and Panama, delivering more than 700 tons of cargo. In addition, the *USS Guam* -- a helicopter carrier -- was dispatched to Peru. Helicopters from this carrier, along with other US aircraft made over 1,900 sorties within Peru, dispensing more than 950 tons of supplies and transporting almost 5,000 personnel. Because normal transportation within the affected area in Peru was completely disrupted, the availability of the US helicopters -- 22 in all -- and other aircraft was very important. Reportedly, the Peruvian Air Force had only two helicopters operative.

3. In addition to supplies airlifted into Peru and the sorties carried out within Peru which together were valued at \$3.2 million, the United States also donated nearly \$6 million in PL 480 food for distribution through US voluntary agencies. The US voluntary agencies alone undertook to feed some 250,000 Peruvians daily. Moreover, the United States provided another \$7.4 million for rehabilitation aid. Thus, US government aid to Peru totaled some \$16.5 million, and together with an additional \$8.5 million from US private organizations, aid from the United States to Peru totaled about \$25 million.

Aid from Others

4. An incomplete list indicates that other countries provided more than \$6 million worth of aid to Peru. The prompt action by Western Hemisphere countries was noteworthy. For example, Argentina, in addition to a cash grant of about \$40,000, provided other emergency supplies including a hospital plane (value of material aid is unknown). Chile donated more than \$200,000 worth of supplies excluding a 60-bed field hospital provided by the Chilean government. From Canada came more than \$1 million worth of aid, which took the form of cash grants, food, clothing, generators, and air support involving eight aircraft.

5. The Cuban response to the Peruvian disaster was particularly swift. Within four days of the disaster Cuba mounted an airlift which by the end of June had completed more than 20 flights. The Cuban assistance included five 30-bed field hospitals, medical teams, 50 mobile kitchens, and other supplies brought in by a large trawler on 18 June. Moreover,

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according to the Cuban press, more than 100,000 Cubans donated blood to the victims of the earthquake. No value has been placed on the Cuban aid, although it is claimed that the first two flights carried some 15 tons of relief supplies. Cuban medical teams have gone home but they have given the medical clinics to Peru.

6. Aid from other countries took similar form, such as cash grants, food, clothing, medical supplies, personnel, temporary shelters, and other supplies. Even Communist China, through the International Red Cross, donated \$600,000 in cash. In most cases, however, the value of the aid provided is not known. Conceivably, it could total a few million dollars more in aid than has been calculated. Moreover, aid continues to flow in from both governmental and private sources -- including from the United States -- to help in the reconstruction of Peru. US assistance to promote rehabilitation and economic development that will dwarf all current aid is now being firmed up.

The Soviet Effort

7. The Soviet response to the disaster which struck Peru was slow in coming. It was not until nine days after the earthquake that a telegram of sympathy arrived from President Podgorny. This was followed by an announcement on the same day that the Soviet Red Cross would send aid to the earthquake victims; in a few days a Soviet airplane arrived in Lima with a token shipment of relief goods valued at about \$35,000.

8. A full month later, apparently waking up to the fact that its prestige had been damaged by its failure to respond generously and promptly to the situation in Peru, the USSR announced that it would conduct a massive airlift to Peru. The announcement, a leftist Lima newspaper noted, came the day after the completion of Mrs. Nixon's trip to Peru. Mrs. Nixon, on the last day of her trip, commented that her trip would . . . "focus the attention of the world on the needs of the earthquake victims. . . ."*

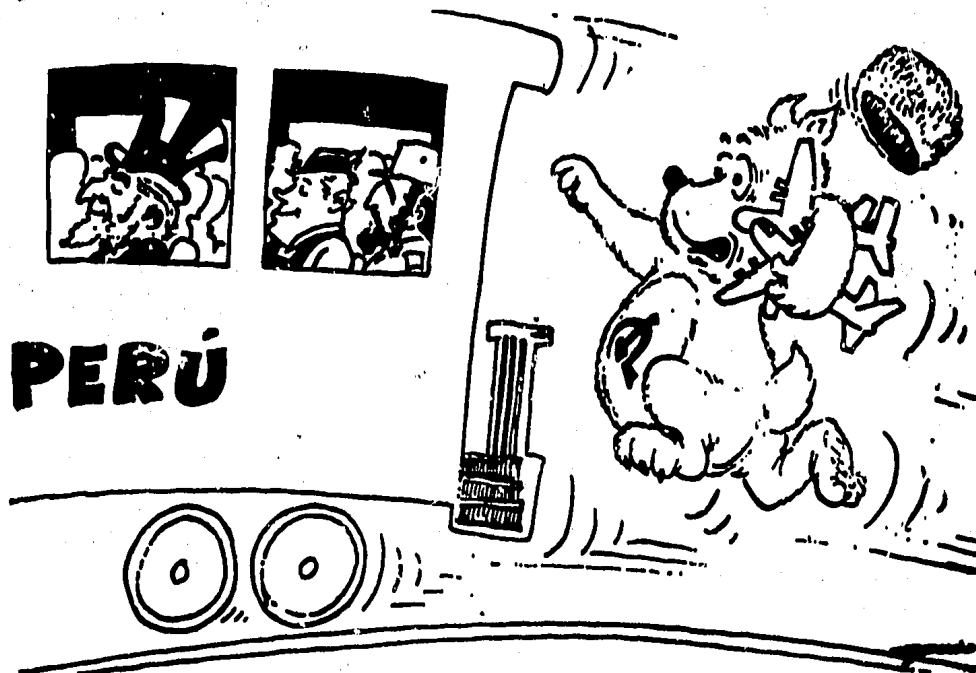
9. The USSR announced that there would be 65 flights, 61 by AN-12s and 4 by the giant AN-22s. According to the original plans, the airlift was to begin on 3 July, with the first plane landing in Lima

* The Soviet response may also have been prompted by the Cuban aid effort.

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on 7 July. The schedule was then revised, calling for all 65 flights to be completed during the period 10-21 July. The first flight -- an AN-12 with six tons of cargo -- finally left the USSR on 9 July and arrived in Lima on 12 July. There were 14 additional flights over the next six days, including ten AN-12s and four AN-22s. On 18 July an AN-22 reportedly carrying equipment and supplies for a hospital was lost over the Labrador Sea. Further Soviet flights to Peru were canceled for one week; they were resumed on 25 July and by the end of the month six more AN-12s flew in supplies. A two-week pause ended with a final cancellation of the airlift on 15 August. It was explained that the remainder of the supplies would arrive by ship. Of the 65 flights planned, only 21 were completed.



"He didn't want to miss the streetcar"

*El Comercio, Lima
July 1970*

10. The Soviet response to the Peruvian tragedy was largely a fiasco from the beginning. From the long-delayed official expression of sympathy, to the meager assistance provided two weeks after the earthquake, to the final cancellation of the highly-publicized airlift, the Soviet effort was a comedy

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of errors. Having awakened to the fact a month late that it had failed to grasp an opportunity to improve its image in Latin America, the Soviet attempt to recoup its losses through a massive airlift also failed because of technical difficulties and bureaucratic bungling.* The airlift was apparently planned in haste. By the time the first Soviet flights were arriving, the Peruvian government declared that the immediate emergency was over and that it was shifting to a "rehabilitation stage."

11. The hasty decision to undertake the airlift did not allow enough time for the proper planning of an exercise of the size and scope envisioned by the USSR. Under normal circumstances considerable preparations are required to ensure a smooth operation for such an airlift, such as aircraft maintenance personnel and spare parts located along the proposed route to take care of equipment failures and other technical problems. Apparently such advance preparations were inadequate. Moreover, the distance to be covered -- more than 7,000 miles, much of it over unfamiliar territory -- undoubtedly compounded Soviet difficulties. Thus, the failure of the airlift to Peru, conducted by the Soviet military, stands out in sharp contrast to the well-planned and executed airlift of arms to the UAR in 1967 and the airlift to Prague in 1968 when Warsaw Pact troops invaded Czechoslovakia.

Scope of Soviet Aid

12. The value of the Soviet aid scheduled to be provided cannot be accurately estimated. The USSR itself has never indicated the amount of aid it would provide. Various estimates put the total tonnage that the 65 flights would have been able to carry at about 700 tons. A partial list, for which no value has been attached, includes a 200-bed hospital, 75

* In an attempt to improve its image the USSR put up its 200-bed hospital in a show-place location on a main road only a few miles from a Peruvian hospital in Huaraz. Moreover, when it finally started receiving patients in early August -- too late to provide emergency aid to earthquake victims -- it was in fact merely supplementing services provided by the local Peruvian hospital which reportedly was no longer overworked.

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medical specialists, medical supplies, 100 prefabricated houses, and building materials and equipment. Three helicopters for its hospital were also sent by the USSR and have since been donated to Peru. According to a Soviet Red Cross official, food valued at 100,000 rubles was to be included among the supplies. Using the average value per ton of supplies provided by US private relief agencies as a guide in the calculation, the most generous estimate of the value of Soviet relief aid -- assuming all 700 tons are sent -- might approach \$1 million exclusive of the hospital and its personnel. This would be about 4% of the total supplied by the United States, and more relief continues to come from the United States as well as other countries.

Conclusions

13. The United States has led scores of other countries in providing emergency and rehabilitation relief to the victims of the Peruvian earthquakes of 31 May. Not only were US personnel and supplies among the first on the scene, but the US government and voluntary agencies have furnished substantially more aid -- valued at about \$25 million -- than all other countries combined.

14. By contrast, the USSR has suffered at least an initial propaganda defeat because of its handling of relief aid to Peru. Not only did the USSR respond very late, but a much publicized airlift designed to salvage something from the embarrassing situation was fraught with problems from the start. Whatever political impact the USSR had hoped to achieve by the airlift probably evaporated when the airlift was canceled after one-third of the flights had taken place.

15. The scope of the Soviet aid effort was small in contrast with that of the United States. The highest valuation that could be put on Soviet aid to Peru would be about \$1 million -- assuming all scheduled deliveries are made -- or about 4% of US aid to Peru.

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